DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 586 CG 013 190

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TITLE Counselor Supervision: A Consumer's Guide.
PUB DATE Oct 78
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (Chicago, Illinois, October, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counseling Effectiveness; *Counselor Training; Higher Education; *Practicum Supervision; *Professional Training; *Supervision; *Supervisory Methods

ABSTRACT

This guide attempts to solve problems caused when a certain designated "brand" of supervision is forced on the counselor trainee with neither choice nor checklist of important criteria. As a tentative start on a guide to supervision the paper offers the following: a definition of supervision; a summary of the various types of supervision; a consideration of the conflicts likely in supervision; and recommendations concerning the maximization of supervisory learning. Included is a table of ratings of five models of supervision on nine dimensions of a supervisory relations, as well as a process that the counselor in search of supervision might follow in order to maximize learning. (BN)

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Counselor Supervision: A Consumer's Guide

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A paper presented at the North Central Association for

Counselor Education and Supervision Annual

Meeting, Chicago IL, October, 1978

CG013190

Counseling Supervision: A Consumer's Guide

The cautious buyer in today's society is likely to make use of one of the many consumers' guides that have become increasingly available at the newsstand or by subscription. These guides are structured in such a manner that criteria for consideration of a given product are outlined. Within such criterion, products are rated against one another. This allows two important options for flexibility: (a) the individual who disagrees with the relative ranking of the criteria will still have the information necessary to make an informed decision concerning a purchase and (b) a person considering an unrated brand can, perhaps, perform some self-evaluation of the product by checking on the designated criteria.

Unlike the knowledgeable consumer described above, the counselor trainee is often forced to accept a certain designated "brand" or "model" of supervision with neither a choice nor a checklist of important criteria. For most trainees, supervision is regarded as a vaguely defined relationship with very fuzzy goals. This paper will present a tentative start on a consumer's guide to supervision. This guide addresses the following issues: (a) a definition of supervision, (b) a summary of the various "brands" or "models" of supervision, (c) a consideration of the conflicts likely in supervision, and (d) recommendations concerning the maximization of supervisory learning.

Definition of Counselor Supervision

For our purposes, counselor supervision is defined as the process by which counselor trainees or practicing counselors receive information, feedback, and support relative to maximizing their effectiveness with clients. It should be noted that this is a rather broad definition that purposefully promotes the view that supervision can be much more than the professional evaluation of

competence wherein the counselor educator (or other experienced "expert") decides on the quality of the student counselor's skills. Supervision, instead, may often occur during coffee with a colleague or, as we will argue later, during a self-evaluation process that involves only the individual counselor.

"Brands" or "Models" of Supervision

Although there are limitless possible supervisory approaches, we have developed a typology of five "pure" supervision models that help clarify the primary possible emphases that a counselor trainee may encounter. These five approaches include: (a) the direct teaching model, (b) the therapeutic model, (c) the Interpersonal Process Recall Model, (d) the self-supervision model, and (e) the consultative model. It must be noted that the brief descriptions provided of these five approaches ignore the inevitable integration between and among models. It is very unlikely that any supervisor, in actuality, could maintain a "pure" model for more than a few supervisory sessions.

Direct Teaching Model

This model requires a supervisor with considerable expertise and experience as a counselor. The supervisor provides direct feedback to the counselor (normally a trainee or a subordinate) with little counselor input other than clarifying questions. The supervisor perceives (a) that there are numerous lessons that counselors must learn in order to be maximally effective and (b) that the best manner to convey this information is to teach it. Thus, direct teaching involves supervisor choice of focus and heavy emphasis on supervisor as opposed to counselor talk.

To capsulize this approach, essentially what the supervisor communicates is "Here is my list of observations, let me expand and clarify how each might

aid your development as a counselor."

Therapeutic Model

The supervisor within the therapeutic model believes in the essential unity of supervision and counseling. The kind of problems that people encounter in everyday life are not at all dissimilar from the difficulties encountered by the counselor or counselor trainee. Attention during supervision is focused upon the dynamics of the counselor and upon feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and risks experienced by the counselor. The focus of the supervision (dynamics) is chosen by the supervisor although the specific issues addressed are selected by the counselor.

A supervisor using a pure therapeutic model would essentially be saying: "Let's talk about your feelings and reactions . . . now, let's go a little bit deeper on that."

Interpersonal Process Recall Model

Norm Kagan's extensive work at Michigan State University on the applications of videotaping to counseling training has led to the development of the Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) Model of supervision. The IPR supervisor (the inquirer) attempts to stimulate the counselor's recall of thoughts and feelings through the stimulus of videotape replay. The counselor, by reviewing the videotape, is able to remember, in vivid detail, everything that had passed through his/her mind during the actual session. The supervisor has no advanced perception as to the direction that the counselor's thinking might lead. The primary intent is counselor awareness, and the inquirer (supervisor) purposefully attempts to avoid building a relationship and endeavors to remain neutral. Direct advice and suggestions are judiciously avoided.

An IPR supervisor, in summary, might be seen as advising the counselor: "Focus on remembering what happened during the actual counseling session. I cannot answer questions--I only ask them: the answers are left up to you!

Self-Supervision Model

The self-supervision model is one that is seldomly identified as a separate approach. In fact, however, most counselors who have completed their education must and do operate under this model. The supervisor in the self-supervision approach is, of course, the supervisee! Self-supervision may include reviewing audio or videotapes, reading professional literature, making extensive case notes, evaluating client progress toward designated goals, or arranging for certain professional development opportunities. Since this is a self-determined process, issues and concerns addressed would be limited to those areas within the awareness of the counselor.

A synopsis of the self-supervisor's self-thoughts might be: "Here is a concern that I have with my client; how can I help myself get beyond this concern?"

Consultative Model

The consultative model must be mentioned last because it may, if followed effectively, incorporate all of the other four approaches to supervision. What sets the consultative approach apart is the emphasis of the supervisor upon establishing a peer-to-peer relationship with the counselor which would allow either or both members to select any given issue for discussion. In fact, not only are topics of discussion mutually determined but, in many cases, style of supervision may well be varied depending upon mutual determination. For example, one session may be similar to an IPR model, while the next cannot be differentiated from direct teaching. The responsibility for directing supervision is shared, and, not unexpectedly, the learning is shared as well.

Our capsulized statement for the consultative model would be: "Let's talk and we'll decide, firstly, what concern we'd best spend our time on and, secondly, how we might use our combined resources to solve that concern."

Table 1 represents an analysis of the five supervision models on their attempts to address each of nine dimensions that are often considered to be criteria for effective supervision. Examination of Table 1 makes it clear that no "pure" approach is universally strong in each of the criterion dimensions. We cannot, therefore, identify the "good" or "bad" supervisory models. Given certain criterion, one model is appropriate while under other conditions, a second is more desirable.

Conflicts during Supervision

A primary source of conflict during supervision relates to the analysis illustrated in Table 1. Let us assume for a moment that a certain counselor trainee has definite ideas of what should and should not be part of supervision. This trainee may learn best from lectures, may be fearful of discussions of feelings, and may be very uncomfortable when goals and directions are not specifically clear. If this individual were assigned to an IPR supervisor, it is almost inevitable that conflict would result. The values of the trainee would clash directly with the values inherent in the IPR methodology. Although it might well be argued that this conflict may be highly productive in encouraging growth in this trainee, such an argument is essentially beyond the present point: that incongruity in values concerning supervision may well result in discomfort between supervisor and supervisee.

Since we have no concrete research evidence to support the effectiveness of any one model over another, our general feeling is to advocate matching of supervisee and supervisor value orientations, if possible. To this suggestion,

Table 1

Ratings of Five "Pure" Models of Supervision

on Nine Important Dimensions of

a Supervisory Relationship

Dimensions (Criteria) for Effective Supervision	Direct Teaching Model	Therapeutic Model	Interpersonal Process Recall Model	Self-Supervision Model	Consultative Model
Building trust through supervisory relationship	0	+	0	NA	0
Dealing with counselor's personal feelings	-	+	+	+	0
Conveying information relevant to specific skills or strategies	+	-	-	0	+
Employing limited supervisory time efficiently	+	-	-	+	-
Clarifying goals and directions of supervision	+	-	-	0	+
Transmitting directly ideas, opinions, and feelings of the supervisor	+	-	-	+	+
Communicating on a peer-to-peer basis	-	-	NA	NA	+
Allowing counselor to direct meetings and set focus	-	-	-	+	+
Providing flexibility to allow application with supervisors who are not extensively trained	-	-	0	0	0

(Table key on next page)

Table 1 (cont'd)

Key to Ratings

+ = this dimension and its fulfillment are seen as strengths of this model

0 = this dimension is relatively irrelevant to this model--the model neither sees this as a strength or a weakness

- = this dimension and its lack of fulfillment are seen as weaknesses of this model

NA = this dimension is irrelevant to this model

however, we add a strong warning: "Both supervisors and supervisees should always remember that the ultimate goal of supervision is aiding the supervisee to become more effective in helping clients to grow and change in ways that the clients desire."

Maximization of Supervisory Learning

Trust appears to be the key to effective supervision. Unfortunately, (or, perhaps, fortunately) none of the five models of supervision appears to have a monopoly on this crucial relationship dimension. Although trust connotes many things, some of its most important meanings in supervision are: (a) a supervisor's belief that the trainee can and will learn appropriate helping behaviors; (b) a trainee's knowledge that the supervisor will not, either directly or by implication, "put down" the trainee for any given counseling or "noncounseling" behavior; (c) a trainee's understanding that despite the likelihood of feedback during supervision, the supervisor will somehow present this feedback in a manner that conveys respect and caring; and (d) a trainee's belief that the supervisor, no matter what his/her academic training and experience, can be looked to for some valuable learnings.

Trust is a two-way communication. Given an honestly trusting relationship, the trainee may well say, "I disagree" as often to the supervisor as the supervisor will say the same to the trainee.

Given this introduction, let us spell out six steps that the counselor in search of supervision might follow in order to maximize learning.

1. Initially, pick out possible supervisors that you feel you can trust. Be open in this selection because some of those supervisors you think you might not trust may simply be the people you don't know very well.

2. Perform a self-study to check out your values in regard to supervision.

(a) Study the dimensions of effective supervision in Table 1. (b) Rank order these dimensions in terms of their importance to you. (c) Weight each dimension from one to five in terms of its relevance to the other dimensions on the list. If all dimensions are equally important, rate all as "3s"; if one is crucial and all others are unimportant, rate the crucial dimension as "5" and all others as "1s"; etc.

3. Interview potential supervisors with particular attention to their views of the importance of each of the dimensions in their supervision. Following the interview, make a chart similar to Table 1 with supervisor's names included instead of the supervisory models. Using your interview notes, rate each supervisor on each dimension (+ = supervisor emphasizes this dimension; 0 = supervisor doesn't appear to feel one way or another; or - = supervisor does not emphasize this dimension.

4. For each supervisor column, add the weights (determined in Step #2) for each dimension that has a plus ("+") and, separately, for each dimension that has a minus ("-"). Subtract the minus total from the plus total, and write this number at the bottom of the column.

5. After you have completed each supervisor column, you will have a tentative rating for each supervisor. The higher the rating, the more your desired supervision approach and the approach of the supervisor are in consonance. A very high score does not guarantee satisfaction in supervision (and satisfaction doesn't guarantee maximal learning), but you may be more likely to get what you want from those with the highest totals.

6. Enter supervision as openly and as honestly as possible. Be self-disclosing; acknowledge both your strengths and your weaknesses, and be ready to work!

Summary

The present paper is merely a brief overview of what might be included in a consumer's guide to supervision. All of what has been included should be greatly expanded in order to be maximally effective in creating a knowledgeable consumer. It is hoped, however, that these introductory comments may be of aid to a few trainees who are presently seeking supervisors.